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A
DISCOURSE
DELIVERED
ON THE
FIFTH OF MARCH,
1778.

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PREACHED

ON
MARCH THE FIFTH,
1778.

BY
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A
DISCOURSE.

GENESES VI. 13.

---The Earth is filled with Violence.---

REASON, that principle which the Author of our existence implanted in our breast, is sufficient to teach us, The offspring of one common parent ought to live in constant harmony : And the inspired writings abound with exhortations to mutual affection, together with the interchange of those kind offices, which are essential to the happiness of families, and of larger societies.

THE true felicity of those who dwell together in unity, is described in the old testament, by some of the most pleasing figures of eastern language. “ Behold,”

says King David, "How good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more."*---And the great founder of our Religion, Jesus Christ, hath assured us, we cannot be his disciples, nor may we hope to share in the peculiar blessings which he hath purchased, unless we feel the influence of kind affection one towards another. †

BUT a shocking reverse, to what reason dictates, and the scriptures enjoin, have the actions of mankind exhibited, in all ages of the world.

THE history of the human race, from Adam to the present day, is gloomy and affecting. In the very page where we read, "Men began to multiply on the face of the earth," it is also written, "God saw the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his

* Psalm. 133.

† John, 13, 34, 35.

heart, was only evil continually." And a little after we read, ---"The earth also was filled with violence." *

THIS is the account which comes to us by inspiration from heaven : Such were the offspring of Adam before the flood, generally abandoned to their lusts, and under the government of the vilest passions.

SHOULD we now look into the records of human actions, which have been preserved by faithful men from the earliest times, we shall find the volums swell with the sad narrative of fraud, injustice, rapine, murder---and every kind of violence.---

By violence we understand an unlawful application of force, or the arbitrary stretch of power which unreasonable and wicked men, have frequently exercised over such as were under their controul.

AGE, natural superiority, and a great variety of circumstances, give some of the children of men opportunity to rule over others. And such is the love of power, which has generally been discovered by the Sons of Adam, that those who had a little were constantly wishing for more ; and

* Geneses, vi. Chap.

those who had arrived to great authority, grew impatient of restraint, and wished for absolute dominion.

PARENTS have been guilty of violence towards their children : Although the ties of nature oblige them to treat their offspring with the tenderest affection, there have been instances of a very different conduct : there have been instances where it was necessary to apply the Apostolic caution, “ Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” *

MASTERS have been guilty of violence towards their servants : Men of unreasonable passions, have treated their slaves and dependants with great inhumanity, not remembering that “ their Master also is in Heaven,” † to whom they must give an account.

THE rich have been guilty of violence towards the poor : They have in many cases extorted from them services without returning a suitable reward. The Apostle James addresseth himself to covetous oppressors in the following language. “ Behold

* Ephesians vi. 4.

† Ephes. vi. 9.

the hire of the laborers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth." *

GOVERNORS and rulers of the earth, have been guilty of violence towards their subjects. Solomon informs us, he "returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the Sun, and behold the tears of such as were oppressed and they had no comforters; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforters." § Such was the melancholy state of the children of men, while under cruel oppressors, that the wise King of Israel adds, ---"I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living, which are yet alive."---

AND should we cast an eye over the Kingdoms of the world at the present day, we shall discover the effects of oppression and violence, on every quarter of the globe.

AMBITIOUS and haughty men, by success in war, or by taking advantage of the weakness or inattention of their neighbors, have established despotism over the greatest

* James v. 4.

B. §. Ecclef. iv. i.

part of the earth. And while some nations have preserved more liberties than others, none have escaped attacks from the common enemy of human freedom.

NORTH-AMERICA, which seemed to have been reserved in divine providence, as the last retreat of a virtuous few, who were determined never to yield those rights which they had received from Heaven to the will of any temporal monarch, has, for some years past, been threatned with slavery and wretchedness.

UNWEARIED attempts have been made by the powers of Great-Britain to deprive the inhabitants of this land of their most valuable interests; and compel them, by violence and cruelty, to lay themselves, with every thing precious to them, at a Tyrant's feet: Ye, so determined is that prince who now disgraces the throne of his ancestors, to establish *absolute Government*, through the several parts, of what he calls, "*his dominions*," that he would rather spill the blood of millions, and expose himself, as well as the Nation to infamy and ruin, than abandon an object so pleasing to him, and which he promises his parliament he "*will steadily pursue*." *

* See his Speech Nov. 20. 1777.

THE inhabitants of this State, received the first attacks which were made by the enemy, on the common rights of America. ---The sons of violence first pointed the instruments of death at our breasts.---

I MIGHT now call you, my friends and fellow citizens, to remember the fifth of March, One thousand seven hundred and seventy.---I might call you to view the ground, where the blood of our brethren was most wantonly spilled on that memorable night, but your feelings, I know, will be sufficiently touched by the worthy Gentleman, who, at the desire of the Town, will soon pronounce an Oration from this desk.

THE shocking massacre, perpetrated on that gloomy evening, which we shall never forget, may be consider'd as the commencement of hostilities by the British troops in America: And the inhabitants of these States, must have been justified by the impartial world, had they resolved from that moment, never to suffer one in the livery of George the III to walk this ground.

BUT such was our patience under aggravated insults---such our hopes that after all, the unhappy dispute might be amicably settled, that we saw forces collecting from

all quarters without resisting them.---We saw the sacred Charters, which had been given, by former Kings of England to the first planters of these Colonies---We saw those sacred Charters which confirmed to us the essential rights of freemen, the sport of a prince, who was bound by solemn ties to observe them.

OPPOSITION was not made to that force which we saw collecting against us, till our enemies carried fire and sword into the heart of the country.

NEVER shall we forget the nineteenth of April, One thousand seven hundred and seventy-five, when a number of Americans were murdered at LEXINGTON, and we heard the first solemn call, to *arm*, and oppose the strength of Great-Britain.

SINCE the sword on both sides has been drawn, the operations of war, on the part of the enemy, have been cruel beyond expression.---Conquest has not been the sole object of their exertions.---Devastation, barbarity and murder, have been their delight.

SOME of our ancient and most flourishing

Towns have been pillaged and burned.*

NEITHER the delicacy of the sex, or the infirmities of the aged were sufficient to secure them against British and Savage inhumanity.---

THE weak and infirm have been slain in their houses.----The venerable head grown white with years has been mangled by ruffian Soldiers.---The blooming virgin dressed for her nuptials, has been seized by Savage hands, hurried away and murdered with unutterable cruelty †---

* *Charlestown* was consumed by the enemy on the 17th of June, 1775. The flames of which warmed the imagination of General Burgoyne, for the striking Description he gave of the Battle on *Bunker's-Hill*.—A great part of *FALMOUTH* was burnt in the month of October, 1775, by the infamous *Mowat*, Capt. of a 16 Gun-Ship. *NORFOLK*, one of the oldest and most flourishing Towns in *Virginia*, was wholly consumed in the month of January, 1776. *KINGSTON*, the third Town in the State of *New-York*, was reduced to ashes in the month of October, 1777.—Besides the wanton destruction of these places, between 4 and 500 houses were pulled down and burnt in *Boston*, while the town was held by British troops.—The enemy took peculiar pleasure in abusing the houses erected for the worship of God. One venerable pile, known by the name of the *OLD-NORTH* was torn to pieces by the sons of violence; those wretches accompanying their impious work, with language too profane and blasphemous to relate.—One large and elegant Building was shamefully defaced, and used as a *Manage* for their *Horse*. Three others, and one among them the most finished and expensive on the Continent, were prostituted to the purposes of Barracks; and one was used as a *Barn* to contain fodder for their Cattle.—

† See Gen. Gates's Letter to Gen. Burgoyne, of Sept. 2, 1777. This Letter contains such an account of the unparalleled barbarity of our enemies, that it should be frequently read, to impress our mind with a sense of the temper and disposition of the men with whom we are at war.—The following is an extract. "That the

BUT I forbear.---The reherfal is too shocking.---Who then could endure the fight of woes, a description of which we find infufferable ?---None, most certainly, none could endure the fight of such dreadful scenes, but those Britains who were so lost to the feelings of humanity, as to reward the Savages for mangling the innocent and defenceless.

AND besides the open murder of the aged and infirm,---of women and children, our enemies have basely *starved* many of our brethren to death, who were in their hands as prisoners.---Many have suffered in the most shocking manner and died in prisons and guard-ships.---More than a

Savages of America, should in their warfare, mangle and scalp the unhappy prisoners who fall into their hands, is neither new nor extraordinary : But that the famous Lieut. Gen. Burgoyne, in whom the fine Gentleman is united with the Soldier and the Scholar, should hire the Savages of America to scalp Europeans, and the descendants of Europeans : Nay more, that he should pay a price for each scalp so barbarously taken, is more than will be believed in Europe, until authenticated facts, should in every Gazette confirm the truth of the horrid tale. ---Miss M'Rea, a Lady lovely to the sight, of virtuous character, and amiable disposition, engaged to be married to an officer in your army, was, with other women and children, taken out of a house near Fort-Edward, and carried into the woods, and there scalped and mangled in a most shocking manner. Two parents, with their six children, were all treated with the same inhumanity, while quietly residing in their once peaceful dwellings. The miserable fate of Miss M'Rea was particularly aggravated, by her being dressed to receive her promised husband, but met her murderer, employed by you. Upwards of an hundred men, women and children have perished by the hands of ruffians, to whom it is asserted, you have paid the price of blood."

thousand *perished* in the city of New-York the winter before last.---And when our brethren were suffering hunger and cold, and the vilest insult, a sordid enemy endeavored to prevail on them to enlist into the British service ; but such was the virtue of those heroes, that the last extreme of misery, was not sufficient to shock their fidelity to their country. They rather chose to perish in want of all things, than draw their sword against the liberties of America.---They met the approaches of death, in their dismal circumstances, with a degree of fortitude seldom to be found in the history of mankind.---Some of our unhappy brethren who were captivated, and carried to Great-Britain, were afterwards sent to the East-Indies, from whence they can have little or no reason to expect they shall ever return.

SUCH acts of meanness and cruelty have our enemies been guilty of.---Such are the men who have promised their haughty master, that by devastation and slaughter they will compel the inhabitants of these States to yield unconditional subjection to his pleasure.

EVERY son of freedom then throughout this Continent, must be justified in the view of that God who hateth violence and

cruelty, when he draws his sword, and appealing to Heaven, solemnly swears, he will never sheathe it, till those miscreants--- those enemies to the common rights of mankind, are utterly destroyed, or drove from this once happy land.

SHOULD the inhabitants of the confederated American States act with wisdom and spirit, it is certainly in their power, by the common smiles of divine providence, to establish their independency and secure the blessings of civil and religious liberty to themselves, and to millions of unborn posterity. And we have the most convincing evidence, that the supreme Ruler of the universe, who giveth the Kingdoms of the world to whomsoever He will, is ready to grant every needed assistance.

DIVINE goodness is to be acknowledged in raising up men of the *first abilities* to watch over our common rights, and give us warning when those rights were invaded.---We esteem *converts* to the true interest of our country, and rejoice to see any come in even at the eleventh hour, and join heartily in the cause of virtue and freedom ; but we revere those characters which *first* appeared, and in opposition to every danger, boldly impeached the enemies of our liberties, and conjured us by

every thing sacred, not to suffer the inheritance purchased by the blood of our fathers, to be wrested from us.

How remarkably hath divine providence taken us up when our circumstances were most perplexing and difficult ?

HEAVEN hath frequently sent us supplies of warlike stores when in great want of them ; and prevented the enemy from acting with vigour against us, when we were prepared but feebly to resist them.*

THE temporary advantages of our enemies, have, in several instances, been turned against them : And altho' by accounts which have been laid before the British parliament, we find they had more than fifty thousand troops in America the last year, their prospects at present, to be sure, are not better than they were when the campaign opened.---One large army, lately under the command of General Burgoyne is wholly conquered ; near half of them wasted and destroyed, and the remainder are

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* There was a time after the Battle on the Heights of Charlestown when our army, which was not large, had not nine rounds of powder to a man, nor was any tolerable supply procured till an ordnance Brig was taken by Capt. *Manley*, some time in Dec. 1775. In the Spring after a large Ship with 75 Tons of powder, together with a great variety of warlike Stores, was taken by Capt. *Mugford* and brought into Boston. Those two Captures afforded a large supply.—The quantities of Provision and Merchandise taken by the American Cruisers, are immense.

now prisoners of war. And the main body under General Howe have effected little more through the last season, than to change their quarters, from New-York to Philadelphia.

To despair since Heaven has done so much for us, would evidence a criminal distrust of divine goodness : To be discouraged since the whole force of Great-Britain, aided by large bodies of German hirelings have effected so little, would discover unpardonable cowardice and meanness of spirit.

WE have every motive to a vigorous exertion, that can operate on the human mind,---If we support our liberties - we may be as happy a people as ever existed. ---We shall have it in our power to settle our own forms of government, and suit them to our peculiar circumstances, our genius and disposition.---We have not only the means of subsistence, but we find many of the means of defence in our own country : And we are at so great a distance from the other parts of the world, that no enemy will ever attack us if we succeed in the present struggle.

BUT on the other hand, should we through stupidity ; or a want of wisdom, or spirit in those who are intrusted with

our most important affairs ; or a general decay of public virtue in all orders of people among us :---Should we by the operation of these or any other causes, suffer our country to be over-run by the enemy, imagination cannot paint the wretchedness that must follow.

SHOULD we suffer ourselves to be conquered, we must bid adieu, a final adieu to freedom civil and religious :---To property :---To domestic happiness, and the most valuable blessings which now distinguish Americans from the wretched subjects, of foreign despotic sovereigns.

WHOEVER thinks of submitting to the power of Britain, as it is now exerted against us, must endeavor to reconcile himself to the ideas of beggary and absolute slavery : Yea further, he must endeavor to reconcile himself to the axe--the halter--the gibbit. The dreadful vengeance which will be inflicted on the Americans, if Great-Britain should prevail, may be inferred from the threatnings which our enemies have denounced, and the cruelties they have already exercised. ---Many no doubt would be shamefully executed.---Those who have most distinguished themselves in the present struggle, would be marked out as the first victims to British fury. When the anger of an in-

censed monarch is in some measure appeased with the blood of thousands, the whole burden of the war, will no doubt be laid on the miserable survivors.

BUT should any American, propose submission to the government of Great-Britain while the king and parliament are using their utmost endeavors to bring us under absolute subjection, or extirpate us from the earth, he would deserve the fate of that timid Athenian, who, for only mentioning an *accommodation* with the Persian King, when his numerous armies were spreading desolation far and wide, was stoned to death; his own mother being the first person to execute the sentence of the people against him.*

It is seriously to be wished, all ranks of people would meditate on the miserable condition we shall be in, if we suffer ourselves to be subdued by Great-Britain.

MANY are engaged in the eager pursuit of riches---many are intriguing for places of honor and profit, as inattentive to the public interest, as if our country were out of danger.---But what advantage, let me ask those men,---what advantage can you expect to receive from your wealth, or your titles, if America is at last subjected to British tyranny?---Should that ever take place, through a general stupidity, or

* See Rollin's ancient History. v. 3.

want of exertion, your wealth, especially if it has been acquired in the present war, and your titles which you hold under those who are denominated by the British government, *The leaders of the rebellion*, so far from being of any service will expose you to the peculiar vengeance of your enemies --- You will be stript of your money, of your lands, and your honours, if not deprived of life itself :---Or should your estates be spared to you, they will be so burdened with taxes, to defray the expences of the war,---to support a large standing army to hold the country in subjection after it is once conquered, and maintain a swarm of crowd officers to govern, to plunder and insult you, that your estates would not be worth possessing :---Yea, death would be desirable rather than a life of such dishonor and misery.

MUCH might be said to describe the common wretchedness in which the inhabitants of this country must be involved, if they suffer themselves to be subdued,---but the time allowed me for this exercise, will not suffer me any farther to enlarge.

AT such a day as this, when we are threatned with the loss of every thing valuable,---when our enemies are many and powerful, we should forget, in some good measure, that we have a private interest :

We should employ our utmost vigour in the cause of the public. A Roman *Hero* informs us, at a time when the liberties of the people required his services, *he gave himself to the immortal Gods, and to his country*; after that solemn consecration he declares he was happy. His conduct affords an example worthy of our imitation.---Every freeborn son of America should at *this time* devote himself to the God of Heaven, and to the service of these United States.

AT once despising danger, and the *paltry* idea of profit, Americans should at this time solemnly vow unto the Lord, that they will give themselves no rest, till our common enemies are wholly subdued.

SHOULD this magnanimity of soul---this heavenly principle inspire our bosoms: should it happily exterminate that meanness of spirit---that criminal selfishness---that inordinate love of money which have imbarassed every thing for some time past, we might defy the forces of Britain, and laugh at her threats.

How ardently then is this noble affection---this enthusiasm for the public good to be desired! May it kindle up in some favorite breast! May it catch from soul to soul, till the inhabitants of this land in general, feeling the irresistible influence, shall unite in one vigorous effort against the enemies of our

civil and religious liberties and put an end to their existence on this part of the world.

Now is the time, the best time in all probability we shall ever have : If we act with wisdom and spirit the forces at present employed against us may be ruined before they can be joined by larger numbers. God forbid my country should let this golden opportunity pass over unimproved ! God grant those who are intrusted with our public affairs may act with wisdom, with spirit, and decision ! And may there be sufficient numbers ready to take the field at this most critical season !

BUT before we conclude, it becomes us as christians to lament the awful spread of moral evil, and pray for the universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, which is a kingdom of righteousness and peace.

SHOCKING have been the calamities which have followed sin in every age of the world.---The earth was soon filled with violence, and its wicked inhabitants were drowned with the flood.---Far the greatest part of those who now dwell on the face of the earth are at once abandoned to their lusts, and are in slavery to arbitrary sovereigns.---But the reign of moral evil shall not be perpetual.---The Son of God came into the world to destroy the works of the

devil.---He will put an end to violence and oppression.---He will overthrow the thrones which have been established by wickedness, and give universal peace to the inhabitants of the world.

THE time shall come, when according to prophetic language "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fattling together." And to give us a representation of an universally pacific disposition, it is added, "And a little child shall lead them."---*

LET us look forward to that Day with pleasure and satisfaction. In the mean time let us unite in earnest prayers to Almighty God, that the sons of violence may be utterly subdued, and that peace may speedily return, and spread her balmy wings over this bleeding land.

WE pray for the peace of our Jerusalem, "They shall prosper that love thee.---Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sake, I will now say, peace be within thee."†

A M E N.

* Isaiah 11. 6.

† Psalm. 122.

